

KENTUCKY BOARD OF NURSING  
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**ADVISORY OPINION STATEMENT**

**THE APPLICATION AND REMOVAL OF A CAST BY NURSES, AND CLOSED REDUCTION  
OF A FRACTURE BY ADVANCED REGISTERED NURSE PRACTITIONERS**

**Introduction**

The Kentucky Board of Nursing is authorized by the Kentucky Revised Statutes Chapter 314 to regulate nurses and nursing education and practice, in order to assure that safe and effective nursing care is provided by nurses to the public.

The Kentucky Board of Nursing issues advisory opinions as to what constitutes safe nursing practice. As such, an opinion is not a regulation of the Board and does not have the force and effect of law. It is issued as a guidepost to licensees who wish to engage in safe nursing practice.

**Accountability and Responsibility of Nurses**

KRS 314.021(2) holds nurses individually responsible and accountable for rendering safe, effective nursing care to clients and for judgments exercised and actions taken in the course of providing care.

KRS 314.021(2) imposes individual responsibility upon nurses. Acts which are within the permissible scope of practice for a given licensure level may be performed only by those licensees who personally possess the education and skill proficiency to perform those acts in a safe, effective manner.

Nursing practice should be consistent with the *Kentucky Nursing Laws*, established standards of practice, and be evidenced based.

**Statutes**

KRS 314.021(2) holds all nurses responsible and accountable for making decisions that are based upon the individuals' educational preparation and experience in nursing.

KRS 314.011(6) defines "registered nursing practice" as:

...The performance of acts requiring substantial specialized knowledge, judgment, and nursing skill based upon the principles of psychological, biological, physical, and social sciences in the application of the nursing process in:

- a) The care, counsel, and health teaching of the ill, injured or infirm;

- b) The maintenance of health or prevention of illness of others;
- c) The administration of medication and treatment as prescribed by physician, physician assistant, dentist, or advanced registered nurse practitioner and as further authorized or limited by the board, and which are consistent either with American Nurses' Association Standards of Practice or with Standards of Practice established by nationally accepted organizations of registered nurses. Components of medication administration include, but are not limited to:
  - 1. Preparing and giving medication in the prescribed dosage, route, and frequency, including dispensing medications only as defined in subsection (17)(b) of this section;
  - 2.
  - 3. Observing, recording, and reporting desired effects, untoward reactions, and side effects of drug therapy;
  - 4. Intervening when emergency care is required as a result of drug therapy;
  - 5. Recognizing accepted prescribing limits and reporting deviations to the prescribing individual;
  - 6. Recognizing drug incompatibilities and reporting interactions or potential interactions to the prescribing individual; and
  - 7. Instructing an individual regarding medications.
- d) The supervision, teaching of, and delegation to other personnel in the performance of activities relating to nursing care; and
- e) The performance of other nursing acts which are authorized or limited by the board, and which are consistent either with American Nurses' Association Standards of Practice or with Standards of Practice established by nationally accepted organizations of registered nurses.

KRS 314.011(10) defines "licensed practical nursing practice" as:

...The performance of acts requiring knowledge and skill such as are taught or acquired in approved schools for practical nursing in:

- a) The observing and caring for the ill, injured, or infirm under the direction of a registered nurse, a licensed physician, or dentist;
- b) The giving of counsel and applying procedures to safeguard life and health, as defined and authorized by the board;
- c) The administration of medication or treatment as authorized by a physician, physician assistant, dentist, or advanced registered nurse practitioner and as further authorized or limited by the board which is consistent with the National Federation of Licensed Practical Nurses or with Standards of Practice established by nationally accepted organizations of licensed practical nurses;
- d) Teaching, supervising, and delegating except as limited by the board;
- e) The performance of other nursing acts, which are authorized, or limited by the board and which are consistent with the National Federation of Licensed Practical Nurses' Standards of Practice or with Standards of Practice established by nationally accepted organizations of licensed practical nurses.

KRS 314.011(8) defines "advanced registered nursing practice" as:

... The performance of additional acts by registered nurses who have gained added knowledge and skills through an organized postbasic program of study and clinical experience and who are certified by the American Nurses' Association or other nationally established organizations or agencies recognized by the board to certify registered nurses for advanced nursing practice. The additional acts shall, subject to approval of the board, include, but not be limited to, prescribing treatment, drugs, devices, and ordering diagnostic tests. Advanced registered nurse practitioners who engage in these additional acts shall be authorized to issue prescriptions for and dispense nonscheduled legend drugs as defined in KRS 217.905, under the conditions set forth in KRS 314.042. Nothing in this chapter shall be construed as requiring an advanced registered nurse practitioner designated by the board as a nurse anesthetist to obtain prescriptive authority pursuant to this chapter or any

other provision of law in order to deliver anesthesia care. The performance of these additional acts shall be consistent with the certifying organization or agencies' scopes and standards of practice recognized by the board by administrative regulation.

### **Advisory Opinion**

After review of the statutes governing nursing practice, and study of the issues and concerns regarding both the role and scope of nursing practice for nurses in orthopedic nursing, the Kentucky Board of Nursing issued the following opinion:

#### **Cast Application**

- 1) It is within the scope of registered nursing practice for a registered nurse to apply a cast for the purpose of immobilization, support and/or protection based upon a direct order of a qualified provider for an individual patient. The application of casts for treatment of musculoskeletal deformities, or compound fractures, and closed reduction of fractures are **not** within the scope of registered nursing practice.
- 2) As required by KRS 314.021(2), a registered nurse who applies a cast is responsible for having adequate educational preparation and clinical experience to perform the procedures in a safe manner.
- 3) The registered nurse should maintain documentation of educational preparation that provides for clinical practice and demonstration of competency in the performance of the procedures.

#### **Removal, Spreading or Splitting of a Cast**

- 1) It is within the scope of registered and licensed practical nursing practice for the nurse who is qualified in the performance of the procedure to perform the removal, splitting and/or spreading of a cast, based upon an order of the patient's provider.
- 2) In order to intervene in neurovascular compromise from cast compression when the physician/provider is not available for issuance of a patient care order, a qualified nurse may split and/or spread a cast.
- 3) Nurses who apply casts, or remove, spread, or split casts should:
  - a) Possess specialized knowledge and competent technical skill in the performance of the procedures;
  - b) Be knowledgeable of the potential complications and adverse reactions that may result from the performance of the procedures;
  - c) Possess the knowledge and skill to recognize adverse reactions, and to take appropriate action;
  - d) Perform the procedures in accordance with established written agency policies and procedures that are consistent with KRS 314.

### Closed Reduction of Fracture

It was the opinion of the Board that the closed reduction of a fracture is within the scope of advanced registered nursing practice for the ARNP who has the educational preparation and current clinical competency to perform the act in a safe effective manner. Closed reduction of a fracture is not within the scope of registered nursing or licensed practical nursing practice.

### **Determining Scope of Practice**

KRS 314.021(2) holds all nurses individually responsible and accountable for the individual's acts based upon the nurse's education and experience. Each nurse must exercise professional and prudent judgment in determining whether the performance of a given act is within the scope of practice for which the nurse is both licensed and clinically competent to perform. In addition to this advisory opinion statement, the Kentucky Board of Nursing has published "Scope of Practice Determination Guidelines" which contains a decision tree chart providing guidance to nurses in determining whether a selected act is within an individual nurse's scope of practice now or in the future. A copy of the guidelines may be purchased from the Kentucky Board of Nursing office or downloaded from the KBN website at <http://kbn.ky.gov>

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